

## Growing Our Economy by Investing in Families: How Supporting Family Caregiving Expands Economic Opportunity and Benefits All Americans (12/08/2022)

The ability to secure quality family care – child care, elder care, or supporting a loved one with a disability – can profoundly impact both individual economic mobility and our national economy. Yet, as the COVID-19 pandemic underscored, options for family care in the U.S. are more expensive and less available than other countries. While the U.S. faced a shortage of care workers before the pandemic, the Department of Health and Human Services has found tens of thousands more left the labor force because of poor working conditions and low compensation, leaving millions of working families in a crippling state of economic uncertainty. Addressing these labor and facility shortages – while also giving people across the country the option to work outside the home and contribute productively to their local economies – is vital to creating equitable gains that reach all Americans throughout the economy.



On Wednesday, December 8, 2021, the Select Committee held a hearing “Growing our Economy by Investing in Families: How Supporting Family Caregiving Expands Economic Opportunity and Benefits All Americans” to examine how access to affordable and high-quality care for American families can enhance economic growth now and in the future.

### Potential Policy Proposals

Experts offered the following recommendations for consideration:

#### Expand Access to Affordable, High-Quality Child Care and Early Education

- Enact universal and free pre-kindergarten for all three- and four-year-olds.
- Incorporate high-quality early childhood development into economic development strategies, given their comparatively higher returns on investment than other strategies can produce.
- Fund students instead of large systems and empower parents to find an educational option that works for their child’s individualized needs.
- Guarantee access to affordable, high-quality childcare, eliminate co-pays for low-income families, ensure that eligible families do not pay more than 7 percent of their household income on childcare, and ensure family-sustaining wages for child care workers.
- Evaluate the disruptive nature of prolonged school closures and identify solutions to address widening education gaps among low-income students, genders and students of color that without attention will hamstring children into adulthood.

## Improve Labor Force Participation and Bolster the Care Workforce through Paid Family Leave and Other Policies

- Enact a national paid family and medical leave program that guarantees at least 12 weeks of job-protected paid leave to all workers for a full range of personal and family caregiving needs, with wage replacement high enough to make leave affordable for all. Enhance the quality of care-sector jobs by ensuring family-sustaining wages with benefits, to improve what has traditionally been a workforce with depressed wages and few benefits and one that has been treated without dignity.
- Enact the National Domestic Workers Bill of Rights, H.R. 3670, to eliminate the exclusion for live-in domestic workers from overtime pay rules and establish other baseline standards such as earned sick days, privacy protections, meal and rest breaks, safety and health measures, and fair scheduling.
- Invest in Medicaid Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) to make these vital services for seniors and people with disabilities more widely available, enabling more family caregivers to work, creating new HCBS jobs, and improving job quality and economic security for homecare workers.

## Hearing Panelists

The following experts provided the potential policy recommendations listed above:



- **Dr. Michelle Holder:** President and CEO, Washington Center for Equitable Growth
- **Ms. Ai-jen Poo:** Co-Director of Caring Across Generations, Co-Founder and Executive Director of the National Domestic Workers Alliance
- **Ms. Melissa Boteach:** Vice President for Income Security and Child Care/Early Learning, National Women's Law Center
- **Mr. Elliot Haspel:** Early-childhood policy expert, Program Officer of Education Policy & Research at Robins Foundation
- **Mrs. Denise L. Johnson:** Mother from Summerville, SC